



COLBY FREE PRESS

Fire!

Early morning blaze damages Colby business

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

A Colby business that escaped destruction in the Aug. 16 blaze that consumed two businesses on East Fourth Street was heavily damaged by fire this morning.

Employees at P & D Auto Repair, 335 E. Fourth were repairing a gasoline tank on a pickup when the tank fell, spilling gasoline. Workers attempted to shut off ignition sources in the area, but they were unable to work fast enough.

"All the ignition sources were up to code (at least 24 inches off the floor,)" said Colby Fire Service Officer J.L. Ellis, the incident commander. "With the amount of vapor, I don't know if they could have been high enough."

Firefighters made an aggressive exterior attack using 2 1/2 inch firehoses. A crew was also sent into the front of the building with smaller 1 3/4 hoses to prevent the fire from spreading into the offices.

"We have a lot of smoke and a little heat damage (in the office,)" said Ellis, but firefighters were able to keep the blaze confined to the north side of the building.

Although the fire was stopped, Ellis said damage was extensive. In addition to several heavily damaged vehicles, the structural steel of the building itself was subjected to intense heat and fire.

"The building is going to have to be inspected," he said. "It took a real beating."



CRYSTAL RUCKER/Colby Free Press

RIGHT: Hi-Plains Co-op employee Justin Wright looks on nervously as smoke pours out of P & D Auto Repair about 8 a.m. this morning. The fire heavily damaged the business, but the Co-op gas station remained undamaged. LEFT: Colby Fire Department Captain Jeff Unger trained a water stream into P & D Auto Repair. Business owners Pat Sumner and Dave Bixenman, along with Josh Schwartz held the hose.

Anthrax cases prompting criminal investigation

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — Federal officials said they have launched a criminal investigation into the source of anthrax contamination at a supermarket tabloid after learning a third employee was exposed.

The announcement marked the most declarative statement yet about an anthrax investigation that comes as the nation is on a heightened terrorism alert. Officials have hinted that it could turn into a criminal investigation but never have been so assertive about the direction of the probe.

The bacteria has already killed one man and put a co-worker in the hospital, prompting widespread concern about bioterrorism. But the FBI said there was no evidence linking the anthrax to a terrorist group.

A nasal swab taken from a 35-year-old woman, whose name wasn't released, tested positive for the presence of anthrax, U.S. Attorney Guy Lewis said Wednesday. She was being treated with antibiotics at a hospital and her condition was not immediately known.

Investigators wearing white moon suits and gas masks were working through the night into Thursday collecting evidence in the newspaper offices of American Media, Inc., which publishes six tabloids.

"The FBI is going through the building on a methodical basis. Floor by floor, cubicle by cubicle, area by area," said FBI special agent Hector Pesquera.

Attorney General John Ashcroft said investigators are working to identify the type of anthrax and how it showed up at the AMI office. He downplayed speculation that the anthrax may have been taken from a lab.

"I have absolutely no evidence to indicate that the anthrax in Florida was stolen from any lab," he said on NBC's "Today Show." "We don't have any ability to announce any source of the Anthrax."

The woman was one of more than 1,000 people tested by health officials, who took nasal swabs and blood tests from those who recently had been in-

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Hector Pesquera, FBI

side the company headquarters.

The search so far has turned up no further sign of anthrax since traces were discovered on the computer keyboard of Robert Stevens, 63, who died Friday of inhaled anthrax, an especially rare form of the disease. Co-worker Ernesto Blanco, 73, has been in a Miami hospital since Monday after he was found to have anthrax spores in his nose.

"This is so devastating to me and my company," AMI chief executive David Pecker said on CNN's "Larry King Live." Pecker said he thought his company was being targeted.

Pesquera said the anthrax contamination was limited to the building and

added "this is not a time for premature conclusions and inaccurate reporting."

Company employees began taking blood tests on Wednesday at the company's offices.

Health officials have emphasized that there is no public health threat. Anthrax tests at Stevens' home were negative, said Dr. Jean Malecki, director of the Palm Beach Health Department.

The anthrax bacterium normally has an incubation period of up to seven days, but could take up to 60 days to develop.

"This can happen to anybody," Pecker said. "This can happen to Time Warner. This can happen to the New York Times."

State settles with 39 of 40 companies in fuel gouging

TOPEKA (AP) — Thirty-nine of 40 companies named in a gasoline price gouging investigation after the terrorist attacks have agreed to a settlement with the attorney general's office. Companies, representing 63 gasoline and diesel stations statewide, have agreed to participate in the Gasoline and Service Station Consumer Aid Program, Attorney General Carla Stovall said.

"These settlements can put an unconscionable result of the tragedy behind us, along with assurances from the retailers that this type of situation will not occur again," Stovall said.

The incidents, which occurred in the hours following the Sept. 11 attacks, saw some station owners raising the price of fuel to as high as \$5 per gallon of regular unleaded gasoline. The agreements announced

Wednesday do not include stations in Johnson, Shawnee and Wyandotte counties where local prosecutors are taking legal action.

As part of the settlement, the companies that charged more than \$2.49 per gallon will contribute more than \$47,250 to the Sept. 11 relief efforts and \$15,570 to the state for investigative fees. Nearly all the money has been received by the state, said spokesman Mark Ohlmeier. It is not known how much money will be refunded to consumers who paid excessive prices for fuel.

However, the lone holdout faces restitution and penalties up to \$10,000 for each sale of overpriced fuel.

Stovall said she will file charges against Charles R. Wood Oil Company of Leavenworth for violation of the Consumer Protection Act.

Briefly

Weather: Breezy

Breezy conditions best describe Colby's forecast for tonight, Friday and Saturday, said the National Weather Service this morning. Tonight, clear early then becoming cloudy, a 30 percent chance for showers, lows 35-40 and southwest winds 10-20 mph, shifting to the northwest 15-25 mph with gusts 35-40 mph late. Friday, mostly cloudy, 30 percent chance for showers, highs 50-55 and northwest winds 20-30 mph. Friday night, partly cloudy, breezy, lows 30-35 and northerly winds 10-20 mph. Saturday and Saturday night, partly cloudy to cloudy, highs in the lower 60s and lows in the 40s with winds 10-20 mph. Sunday, partly cloudy with the highs in the middle 50s. Colby's high Wednesday was 65 and the overnight lows this morning was 29. Precipitation remains at 0.03 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth in Colby is averaging 64 degrees and 58 degrees at the weather service in Goodland. The records for Oct. 11: 90 in 1955 and 17 in 1896. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Legion Commander to Colby

American Legion National Commander Ric Santos of Maryland will tour the Sunflower State beginning Oct. 14.

Santos was elected national commander during the closing session of the Legion's National Convention in San Antonio in August. He will have coffee at the Colby Post, 1850 W. 4th, from 4:30-5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 16. During his tour Santos discuss the Legion's 2002 legislative priorities, including National Security and Defense, Veterans Health Care, and Flag Protection. Santos will be accompanied by Kansas American Legion State Commander Elgin Wahlborg, Arkansas City, and Vice Commander Russell Shughart, Overland Park.

Girl Scouts to sponsor craft fair

Crafters from as far as Great Bend and Burlington, along with local vendors, will be in Colby on Saturday, Oct. 13 to participate in this year's Craft-a-Ganza. The event each year is organized by the local Girl Scouts and will be held in the Colby Community Building from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"These crafters will be offering woodcrafts, baked goods, sunflower art, fleece products, jewelry designs, sweatshirts, homemade candles and handiworks of crocheting and tating," said Jan Barnum, one of the coordinators. Along with the wide variety of craft items, holiday and year 'round products will also be available. "Come on down to the community building, have a homemade lunch at our concession stand and get a headstart on Christmas shopping," she said.

Letters wanted for special day

Organizers of the first "A Day In My Community," are urging all Thomas Countians to take part in today's Kansas Family and Community Educators' writing event. Karen Larmer, area coordinator, asks that people interested in writing a journal of their thoughts and life should pick up a form at either the Prairie Museum of Art and History, Pioneer Memorial Library or the Thomas County Extension Office. Forms can be returned to any of these three locations from Oct. 12 through Oct. 22 or they can be mailed to: A Day In My Community, General Delivery, Colby, Kan., 67701. For questions, call Larmer at 462-3610.

Sign dedication planned Friday

The Parent Teacher Organization in conjunction with Colby Elementary School has planned a dedication ceremony of the new sign for the school, said Crystal Standage, one of the coordinators. The event is Friday, Oct. 12, at 2:30 p.m. in front of the school. The ceremony will include a ribbon cutting, recognition of those who helped in the project and brief remarks by Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen.

Teddy bear collection underway

Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society of two-year colleges, is collecting teddy bears and other stuffed

animals for children who need a friend, said Sarah Heier, one of the collection organizers. Drop-boxes are located in Dillons and the Colby Community College bookstore until Thursday, Nov. 1. For information or questions, call Heier at 462-3100.

Hunter education course upcoming

There will be a hunter education course offered this fall by the The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Colby volunteer instructors, and the Colby Recreation Department. The course will be held at the Colby Community Building and those planning to attend must be present at all the sessions, said Benny Young, with wildlife and parks. The dates of the course will be Tuesday, Oct. 23 and Thursday, Oct. 25 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday, Oct. 27 from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., with range instruction from 2 to 4 p.m. Students also need to pre-enroll at the Pi-rates Den, 1115 S. Franklin in Colby. For questions, call (785) 462-6631; (785) 462-7602; or (785) 462-3367.

Students to rake leaves

The Colby High School Service Club is planning a community-wide fall leaves clean-up day through the second weekend of November, said Roni Dietz, adult advisor. For those wanting to have their leaves raked, call 465-5300.

